

Norton CBC Message to America Promotes D.C. House Vote Bill - July 28, 2006

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Washington, DC--Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) will deliver the "Message to America," the national weekly address of the Congressional Black Caucus, to educate Americans about the denial of constitutional voting rights here, and to educate the country about the D.C. Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act, the bipartisan bill for a House vote, and what it needs to get passage. The message will air tomorrow (Saturday, July 29th) at 12:06 pm EST on American Urban Radio Networks (AURN) affiliate stations. Norton will also use the radio address to talk about the historic signing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act extension on Wednesday, and about President Bush's five year failure to enforce the existing Act.

Norton said, "This has been a successful week for two voting rights priorities for African Americans. The Congressional Black Caucus' success in beating back harmful amendments to the 1965 Voting Rights Act in the House was followed by Senate passage, 98-0. Less well known is the other civil rights act that has been pending since the birth of the Republic 205 years ago for full congressional voting rights for the citizens of the District of Columbia...A major step was taken on Tuesday with the announcement of a September hearing that must precede a committee vote."

On Tuesday, the House Judiciary Committee announced a hearing on the House vote bill, a critical step necessary before there can be a mark-up in that committee, which has primary jurisdiction over the bill. The Committee on Government Reform passed the bill, sponsored by Norton and Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA), 29 to 4 on May 18, 2006, after Norton negotiated an agreement that brought the bill to an historic committee vote.

The full text of Norton's "Message to America" follows.

"Hello, I'm Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia with the Congressional Black Caucus Message to America.

This has been a successful week for two voting rights priorities for African Americans. The Congressional Black Caucus' success in beating back harmful amendments to the 1965 Voting Rights Act in the House two weeks ago was followed by Senate passage, 98-0, on Wednesday.

However, President Bush, who signed the law on Thursday, has consistently fought enforcement of the Act in the courts and approved his first voting rights case for African Americans this month after five years in office.

Less well known is the other civil rights act that has been pending since the birth of the Republic 205 years ago for full congressional voting rights for the citizens of the District of Columbia. But today, the citizens who live in the majority African American nation's capital are close to achieving the first leg of the other civil rights act, a full vote on the floor of the House of Representatives.

I have represented these Americans for 15 years and have the vote in committees. I am a member of the House of Representatives with the same privileges as other members--except for one.

The privilege denied District residents is the vote that has sent them to Iraq and to every war the nation has fought. The vote is denied us although District residents are top income taxpayers-second per capital in the nation.

The D.C. Fair and Equal House Voting Rights act is a bipartisan solution that takes the politics out of the equation. Democratic D.C. gets one vote and Republican Utah gets one. The bill has passed in one committee with almost as many Republican as Democratic votes.

House Judiciary Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin also has promised a vote in his critical committee. A major step was taken on Wednesday with the announcement of a September hearing that must precede a committee vote.

Rep. Sensenbrenner, who supported the Voting Rights Act 25 years ago when President Reagan did not, used his Judiciary Committee chairmanship this year to lead that fight on the Republican side. His strong voting rights record is consistent with his promise to allow the vote in the Judiciary Committee that could bring D.C. voting rights to the floor this year.

We thank Representative Sensenbrenner for his leadership on the 1965 Voting Rights Act. We ask him to do the same for H.R. 5388, the D.C. Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act pending in his committee."